

MANAGING ECOSYSTEMS AND MITIGATING CONFLICT:

LOCAL CONVENTIONS

RESILIENCE AND ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE SAHEL - ENHANCED RESILIENCE



Summary

A local convention (Convention Locale in French) collectively defines and enforces the rules for residents of neighboring rural communes to sustainably **manage their natural resources and prevent conflicts**. It consists of a **land use plan** and management guidelines. A local convention helps communes understand and organize the use of common spaces to avoid over-exploitation of natural resources and conflicts between competing users (especially between farmers and herders).

Developing Local Conventions

The local convention is the result of a **systematic process of negotiations** among stakeholders who have a differing and sometimes conflicting interests. Beyond farming and herding, interests include activities such as gold mining, access to water for consumption and production, and infrastructure such as dams. After an initial natural resource inventory and diagnosis by the commune, REGIS-ER supports the commune to **mobilize, organize and build capacity to map existing resources** (infrastructure, livestock corridors and potential conflict zones), zone their use, and hold meetings to discuss and validate rules. Much of the work is undertaken by committees established with representatives from the various stakeholder groups.

Upon completion, the local convention is validated by the commune council and then signed by the (elected) mayor and the (government appointed) administrative authority for the commune. The local

convention is reviewed for consistency with the national law, and the signature by authorities is a public event celebrated by the local population. Afterwards, comes enforcement – by the local bodies, including a local convention committee of the commune council. REGIS-ER has supported the development of **17 local conventions** (out of 25 communes).

HIGHLIGHT: TONDIKANDIA TAKES CONTROL OF ITS LAND USE MANAGEMENT

The population of Tondikandia commune (Tillabery region, Niger) felt an urgent need to stop the degradation of their natural resources, their shared heritage. Following the methodology with support from REGIS-ER, the commune signed its local convention on February 10, 2015. Five months later the commune incorporated the Local Convention into its Commune Development Plan.

Since 2015, the commune has achieved outstanding results: The total number of cases of conflicts brought before commune or traditional authorities has decreased from 60 in 2015 to 20 in 2017.

The number of cases involving livestock passage through farmland, between sedentary farmers and pastoral herders, has decreased from 20 in 2014 to 1 in 2017. All the village land-tenure commissions in the commune are functional and reported revenue of 350,000 CFA francs (\$630) in 2016 generated by issuing land titles. In 2017, the commune also enforced the local convention tree management rules, which resulted in 26 fines for illegally cutting trees.

Lessons Learned

The development and enforcement of local conventions has suggested best practices that foster sustainability of local governance of natural resources management:

- Take time to undertake a **bottom-up process**, no rush and no directives, but true negotiations. It takes time to **involve all stakeholders** (villagers, traditional leaders, commune authorities, government technical services, and so on), to have the various parties discuss difficult issues and to negotiate agreement. The local convention encourages the commune to address resource management concerns, map common resources, trace livestock corridors, pasture lands and watering places, and, above all, find solutions to conflicts and land degradation.
- **Publicize and mainstream the document:** The local convention is not the goal in and of itself. After signature, the commune proceeds with **outreach to inform constituents** about the local convention through public forums and local radio, including panel discussions to explain the provisions of the local convention in local languages.
- **Monitor progress:** Successful communes set up a monitoring committee to make sure that natural resource management rules are respected, and to urge authorities to issue fines for clear violations of the rules.
- **Demonstrate and promote scale up:** There have been several cases of **spontaneous adoption in surrounding communes** that have visited communes with effective local conventions. Facilitating **sharing of information and experience** between commune leaders can contribute to wider adoption.



Bouroum signs its Local Convention in June 2017.

The local convention in Bouroum commune (Centre-Nord Region, Burkina Faso) was signed in June 2017, and it seems to have already raised awareness among the population.

Livestock owners asked the president of their village development council to trace livestock corridors because they had heard about a document in the commune (the local convention) that authorizes it. They feared that farmers would again plant crops in the unmarked corridors, squeezing livestock into a smaller space, which would inevitably create conflicts when livestock damaged these illicit fields.

On their own initiative, villagers proposed painting trees at their own expense to demarcate the corridor that were mapped in the local convention, and they obtained the approval of the village chief (the head of the village development council) and the mayor of the commune. The operation was a complete success: neither the village development council nor the commune has received a single complaint about conflicts between farmers and herders. The villagers expressed their satisfaction and pride that they had been able to manage this issue peacefully and that farmers and herders had respected one another's livelihood.



The local convention in Droum commune (Zinder Region, Niger) was signed in November 2015, followed by forums and radio shows in Hausa on Anfani, a popular private radio station. Saïdou Sani Agi, the mayor, vouches for its success:

"After the radio broadcast, listeners kept calling in from all over learn more and congratulate us. Even the governor of Zinder couldn't bear to miss the broadcasts. After more than two years, we can **clearly see changes in attitudes and behaviors of our population towards their natural resources**. They cut down fewer trees, maybe because we set up committees to monitor that. The number of young trees has notably increased in the fields, protecting soils and increasing yields. Moreover, the mayors of Hamdara and Dakoussa communes asked us to coach them in developing their own local conventions. They are also seeking technical support from projects active in their communes. We became an example. It encourages us to do even better!"